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The Republican Convention sends a thank-you note

By Maria Cino

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When Minneapolis-St. Paul was chosen to host the 2008 Republican National Convention, we knew that the capabilities and hospitality of the area would be phenomenal. Now that the convention is over, we can confidently say the Twin Cities exceeded all expectations.

The Twin Cities last hosted the Republican National Convention in 1892, and much has changed since our party convened here to nominate Benjamin Harrison for reelection. The 1892 convention was attended by about 10,000 delegates and reporters, and most delegates traveled to the convention by stagecoach or train. No one was concerned with satellite van parking, the logistics of shuttle buses, or a secure perimeter.

By contrast, the national convention that wrapped up Thursday night brought nearly five times as many visitors to the Twin Cities. Preparing for this event required a staff of 100 and some 10,000 volunteers.

Above all, putting together a successful modern convention requires the patience, support, and accommodation of the host city. And as president and CEO of the 2008 Republican National Convention, I can attest that Minneapolis and St. Paul have no equal. From the shuttle bus drivers and the staff at the area's amazing hotels and restaurants to a spectacularly capable security force, your cities made us all feel at home.

The hallmarks of the people of the Twin Cities — compassion and generosity — were also on display as our focus turned, at the start of the convention, to a serious effort to assist those affected by Hurricane Gustav. We worked hand-in-hand with volunteers and area business leaders to make sure people visiting from the Gulf states had the information and resources they needed. Thanks to the efforts of many Minnesotans, our Gulf state guests' hearts were a bit lighter; they knew that the residents of Minneapolis-St. Paul were ready to assist them and ensure their families and communities were safe and sound.

The convention was a great success. History was made, leadership was on display. And all of it came together with Minneapolis-St. Paul as a welcoming and generous backdrop. I want to extend a warm and sincere "thank you" for making our time in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area unforgettable.

Maria Cino is president and CEO of the 2008 Republican National Convention.

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